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For Immediate Release
May 21, 2012

Vice President Jim Says CCSD Split Would Hurt Navajo Children

FARMINGTON, N.M. – Navajo Nation Vice President Rex Lee Jim said a proposed new school district would be a step back for race relations between Navajos and border towns last week.

“This proposal negatively impacts the Navajo Nation,” Vice President Jim said during a quasi-judicial hearing held by New Mexico Education Secretary-designate Hanna Skandera last Wednesday evening at San Juan College. About 300 people attended the hearing.

The hearing was in response to a petition from Children First, a Kirtland based group. The group’s proposal would split the current Central Consolidate School District into two school districts and end CCSD’s boundaries at the end of the reservation lines.

Supporters say the split would create better schools.

“The Navajo Nation strongly opposes the split. It's not in the best interest of children, of the schools, of the community, of the future,” Vice President Jim said.

The proposed Kirtland School District would not have any boundaries on the Navajo reservation and would have about 80 percent of students be of Native American decent.

Some Children First supporters have long opposed Navajo preference laws and implementation of Navajo culture and language lessons into district classrooms.

“The Navajo Nation has entered this debate because most of the students are Navajo,” Vice President Jim said.

Vice President Jim said the school district’s boundaries would be reminiscent of Jim Crow laws, when children were separated according to the color of their skin and used separate water fountains.

The Vice President added that the two school districts would force a Navajo child to choose and think that an off reservation school is better than an on reservation school.

“We have struggled for years to undo the colonized Navajo mind,” he said.

Sec. Skandera said she will issue a decision about a new school district by May 29.